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COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

Fifty-first session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 35th MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Tuesday, 21 February 1995, at 7 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. BIN HITAM (Malaysia)

later: Mr. MEGHLAOUI (Algeria)

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(b) NATIONAL INSTITUTIONS FOR THE PROMOTION AND PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS;

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The meeting was called to order at 7.15 p.m.

FURTHER PROMOTION AND ENCOURAGEMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS, INCLUDING THE QUESTION OF THE PROGRAMME AND METHODS OF WORK OF THE COMMISSION: (agenda item 11) (continued)

(a) ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES AND WAYS AND MEANS WITHIN THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM FOR IMPROVING THE EFFECTIVE ENJOYMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS;

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(d) HUMAN RIGHTS, MASS EXODUSES AND DISPLACED PERSONS

(E/CN.4/1995/5 and Add.1, 42-45, 46 and Add.1, 48, 49, 50 and Add.1, 3, 51, 107, 113, 147; E/CN.4/1995/NGO/8, 22 and 28)

ADVISORY SERVICES IN THE FIELD OF HUMAN RIGHTS (agenda item 21) (continued)

1. Mr. DHAKAL (Nepal) said that in recent years there had been increasing focus on socio-economic development and the equality of women. The pursuit of a gender-sensitive approach to human rights testified to a major shift in the international community's perceptions and efforts. Nepal was fully committed to improving the socio-economic, political and legal status of women through legislative measures, development programmes and activities. It had ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Political Rights of Women. The Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal guaranteed the fundamental rights of both men and women and directed the State to strive to enable women to participate to a greater extent in the task of nation-building by making special provision for their education, health and employment.

2. In order to increase the participation of women in the legislative and decision-making processes, the Constitution required political parties to nominate women candidates for parliamentary elections. Following the restoration of democracy in 1990, women candidates had participated in the parliamentary elections in 1991 and 1994, and some had been elected to Parliament. Sectoral development policies and programmes were currently being carried out with a view to increasing the participation of women in national development.

3. There had been tremendous progress recently in the implementation of United Nations policies to ensure the protection and promotion of the human rights of women. A number of international instruments on women and human rights had been adopted, monitoring bodies established, an international year and decade for women proclaimed, and world conferences convened. Despite those efforts, much remained to be done in order to overcome the obstacles to the full enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms by women.

4. Lack of education, especially in rural areas, denied women full partnership in society, and that issue came high on the international agenda. Though older women made up a substantial segment of the world's population, many of them were economically disadvantaged. In view of current demographic trends, there was an urgent need to protect the human rights of older women by instituting measures to enable them to remain dignified and productive members of society.

5. There was a greater need to alleviate poverty, ensure equal access to health services and strengthen women's ability to enter the labour market and achieve self-reliance. The Fourth World Conference on Women, to be held in 1995, presented an immense opportunity to take stock of and consolidate past achievements and to chart a pragmatic and consensual course of action for the advancement of women in the future. It was not sufficient merely to integrate women into development: their empowerment required social transformation and recognition of their productive potential. Equally important was the development of strategies to increase the number of women in decision-making posts.

6. Increasing violence against women in various parts of the world was a matter of serious concern. His delegation welcomed the appointment of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women and commended her for her first report, which had set out findings on the causes and consequences of violence against women and made a number of preliminary recommendations for eliminating such violence. Consideration should be given to international cooperation in such efforts.

7. Ms. CARRIZONA de LOPEZ (Colombia) said that although violence had been used as a way of solving internal conflicts at certain periods of Colombian history, reconciliation and peace were now a priority for both the Government and the majority of citizens. The Government had launched a programme involving a commitment to defence of human rights, together with an alternative model for development in which social criteria dictated the approach to opening the country's economy to international markets.

8. Much of the violence to which Colombians were subjected arose from the ongoing armed conflict. The Government had, however, made progress in dealing with the problems of extrajudicial execution, disappearance, torture and impunity. The police force had been reorganized and improved internal disciplinary measures established. As a result, nearly 800 cases had been dealt with, 40 per cent of them culminating in disciplinary action. A reform of the Military Code of Criminal Justice was under way. Human rights bureaux had been created within the armed forces and regional police headquarters. Additional Protocol II to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949 had been ratified and the President had expressed his willingness to accept national or international supervision in order to verify compliance with the commitments thereby undertaken.

9. In order to put an end to impunity, a number of measures giving priority to investigations of human rights violations had been launched. Progress was being made on a bill for the establishment of a single disciplinary code for members of the armed forces, under which genocide and disappearance would become extremely serious offences and any official under investigation would

be suspended for six months in order to prevent interference in the investigation. A commission had been set up to investigate the events in the town of Trujillo between 1988 and 1990. Upon receiving the commission's report, the President had acknowledged the responsibility incumbent on the Colombian State for the actions or negligence of public officials during those events. The Government had accepted economic responsibility and had committed itself to submitting legislation to Congress to provide for compensation of victims. It had undertaken to adopt broad social welfare measures in memory of those who had disappeared and to erect a monument to all the victims. The Government hoped that its attitude would serve as an example to all public officials of its unwavering commitment to human rights.

10. Those measures coincided with work on a bill which would enable the Ministry of the Interior to act as an interlocutor with towns and administrative districts in resolving social conflicts. Public order, peace, coexistence among citizens, human rights and ethnic minorities would fall within the competence of the new ministry.

11. The vigilante groups wrongly referred to as "paramilitary units" were another consequence of the armed conflict and the use of violence by drug traffickers, and were being targeted within the overall strategy to combat violence. Measures implemented under that strategy included encouraging the Procurator-General to adopt effective measures to act against such groups, including establishing special units for investigating and punishing their crimes and developing and applying a policy of specific legal action against members of such groups. It was hoped that the strategy would be reinforced by a General Disarmament Act to be submitted by the Executive to Congress.

12. The Government's activities also covered educational and preventive measures and cooperation with international bodies devoted to the defence of human rights. The curriculum in police training courses had been revised to accord more time to the subject of human rights and international humanitarian law. Information campaigns for all police officers were being carried out. In 1994, the Representative of the Secretary-General on internally displaced persons, the Special Rapporteur for extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions and the Special Rapporteur on the question of torture had visited Colombia and had had the opportunity to speak with the authorities and victims and with non-governmental and governmental organizations. The reports on those missions gave the Commission a better idea of the complexity of Colombia's problems and the extent of the violence afflicting it.

13. Further visits by special rapporteurs could be so organized as to ensure a continuous exchange of information and follow-up. A committee of high-level civil servants would be set up to study and implement the recommendations of United Nations human rights bodies and to furnish such bodies with periodic reports. Its efforts would focus on violence against highly vulnerable groups such as political opposition groups, trade unions and indigenous leaders. The Special Rapporteur on the independence and impartiality of the Judiciary, jurors and assessors and the independence of lawyers would soon be invited to visit the country.

14. The High Commissioner for Human Rights had accepted the Government's invitation to visit Colombia and analyse the situation there. Her Government had requested assistance from the Centre for Human Rights for a project under which a member of the High Commissioner's staff would be delegated to work with Colombian authorities in evaluating the main areas where work needed to be done. Assistance in the reform of the Military Code of Criminal Justice was paramount for the Government, and to that end it had set up an inter-agency commission with participation by non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

15. The Representative of the Secretary-General on internally displaced persons had recently attended a seminar convened by the Government in conjunction with various NGOs for the purpose of studying and identifying measures required to deal with the problem of displaced persons. In acknowledgement of Amnesty International's efforts to promote human rights, the Government had invited it to open an office in order to facilitate continuous monitoring of the country's situation.

16. Turning to the second focus of government efforts to achieve peace, namely social reform, she said that one of the objectives was to meet the needs of the poorest and most marginalized sectors of Colombian society. The Government had submitted to Congress a series of amendments to the national budget, including a significant increase (20 per cent) in the overall budget for the purpose of redirecting public spending towards social priorities. The establishment of a "social solidarity network" should result in concrete and direct support for the most vulnerable sectors. During the current administration, such efforts had been allocated over 1 per cent of GDP. By the end of the administration's tenure, in 1998, spending on education would amount to 4.8 per cent of GDP and on public health nearly 5 per cent, representing an increase of around 50 per cent compared with the preceding period.

17. The Family Welfare Institute would be combating the problem of street children by providing full support for 15,000 youngsters. New housing was to be built in urban areas and 1 million hectares would be allocated in rural areas as a way of solving the problem of housing and small-scale land ownership.

18. The overall objective was to ensure that social policy did not remain a poor relation of economic policy. One of the obstacles to attainment of that objective was the ongoing domestic political debate which, while it was one of the strengths of Colombian democracy, nevertheless affected the implementation of the social programme.

19. The policy of peace represented an appeal to broad sectors of Colombian society. The Government's task was to meet legitimate concerns through a policy of dialogue and in a context of tolerance.

20. Mr. HUSSAN (Sudan) welcomed the report by the Representative of the Secretary-General on internally displaced persons and hoped the Commission would extend his mandate so he could continue to apply his objective and balanced approach to the problem of displacement and internally displaced persons, a problem which greatly concerned the Sudanese Government.

The underlying causes of displacement in the Sudan included drought, desertification and the unjust war in the southern part of the country. The Government had established a capable and effective mechanism to deal with displacement issues and to coordinate assistance from international agencies and NGOs. A number of governmental bodies had been working to find adequate housing for displaced persons and to ensure their stability and well-being.

21. While making tireless efforts to achieve the resettlement of displaced persons, his Government was seeking a comprehensive solution through efforts to restore peace in the south of the country and to conduct negotiations with dissident factions. Political observers, the international community and NGOs were well aware of those efforts, which had included two rounds of talks in Nairobi, talks sponsored by the Nigerian Government and negotiations currently in progress. Considerable progress had been made, but the dissident factions had been under external pressure to call for secession, and their insistence on partition had been a stumbling-block to achieving real peace.

22. His Government's commitment to peace and stability offered new and valid prospects for achieving that noble objective through the involvement of large numbers of Sudanese politicians and citizens in the peace process. Conferences had been organized and a Higher Council of Peace had been formed with the support of thousands of returnees. "Peace villages" had been established and stability projects launched in all southern regions. Those efforts had culminated in the institution of a federal Government and the division of the Sudan into 26 states, 10 of which were in the south.

23. The international community's responsibility for displaced persons was a humanitarian one emanating from the links between the countries of the world and based on a common desire to provide displaced persons with the same living conditions as those enjoyed by the world's other citizens. That could be achieved only by combining international efforts with those of local Governments. It was therefore essential to establish cooperation between the host country and the relevant international organizations so that the country could receive the necessary assistance in enabling displaced persons to revert to a stable lifestyle.

24. The Sudan had had unique experience in cooperating with international organizations that provided humanitarian aid to displaced persons. With no preconditions except that national sovereignty, security and legislation should be respected, the Sudan had opened its doors to NGOs, which had given generous donations to displaced persons located there. An example of such actions was the "lifeline agreement" concluded between the Sudanese Government and UNICEF. He paid a tribute to the late Mr. James Grant, Executive Director of UNICEF, who would always be remembered with affection in the Sudan for his broad-mindedness and patience. He also paid tribute to the International Committee of the Red Cross for the efforts it had made under the agreement concluded with the Sudanese Government.

25. Other countries could learn a great deal from the Sudan's experience, and it was ready to offer its assistance if circumstances so required. Its work on the resettlement and repatriation of displaced persons testified to its desire to cooperate with international organizations. The peace villages constituted an excellent example of success in such efforts, and he wished to pay a tribute to the work done by CARE in that context.

26. His Government's willingness to cooperate with the international community and NGOs was likewise demonstrated by the estimated 62 per cent increase in 1994 in the provision of international humanitarian assistance, compared with the level of 1993, and the growth to 122 in 1993, compared with 21 in 1992, in the number of corridors for relief operations. UNICEF's programmes to enable returnees to produce their own food had resulted in a 17 per cent rate of food self-sufficiency in the south of the country; UNICEF was also carrying out programmes to eradicate the Guinea worm. There were promising statistics for agricultural production, particularly that of grain and it was to be hoped that donors would use that information in channelling their assistance for the rehabilitation and resettlement of displaced persons. He particularly welcomed paragraphs 62 to 69 of the report of the Special Representative (E/CN.4/1995/50).

27. Grave violations had been committed by dissident factions against unarmed citizens and peaceful tribes: people had been robbed, old men killed, women raped and children abducted for service in rebel forces. Even the dissident factions themselves had admitted responsibility for those atrocities, as attested to in reports of such organizations as Amnesty International and Africa Watch. Dissident groups had also intercepted relief trains and ships and looted relief supplies. He mentioned those issues in order to underline his Government's conviction that cooperation between international and non-governmental organizations and the Sudanese Government and local authorities was the only way of ensuring the provision of assistance to those in need, the fair distribution of supplies and the achievement of a decent standard of living for displaced persons.

28. Voices had recently been raised in many forums in favour of enabling the international community and NGOs to furnish protection for internally displaced persons, on the grounds that displacement was analogous to refugee status. But a displaced person was someone who moved within the borders of his homeland owing to natural disasters or internal strife. He was free to travel and settle wherever he wished. Consequently, he was bound by national legislation and was entitled to the rights and duties of citizenship. Responsibility for his protection fell squarely on the State, without any need for international involvement. A refugee had an entirely different status: he sought asylum in a foreign country and thereby became subject to international legislation governing refugees. He was under international protection while travelling, and had all the more need for such protection since he had lost that of his native land.

29. To accord international protection to internally displaced persons would give rise to complications, run counter to the machinery governing assistance for refugees, contravene national legislation and be tantamount to intervention in the internal affairs of States. In view of the vague manner in which the issue had been presented by some circles, and in the light of

certain recent events that had led to foreign intervention, his Government feared that the call for international protection was designed to mask hostile political intentions.

30. His delegation took the view that responsibility for displaced persons who remained within their own national borders lay with their Governments, which were better able to enforce law and provide the necessary assistance. Governments could also cooperate with the international community in delivering humanitarian assistance, as well as helping displaced people to resettle, as the Sudan had done by establishing peace villages in the south of the country. The primary responsibility of the Government was not altered by the fact that UNHCR and other international agencies also had an important role to play. His delegation therefore took issue with the view that delivery of international aid might be hindered if displaced people remained within the jurisdiction of their own Governments. That was not the case in the Sudan, whose Government, like most others in the same position, was not hostile to outside aid. Nor could the suggestion that displaced persons did not enjoy adequate housing, health care and other services be taken at face value.

31. Among the main causes of displacement were natural disasters and low levels of socio-economic development, which sometimes led to armed conflicts. The Sudan was making great efforts to improve environmental conditions and to return displaced persons to their homes, and the competent authorities were providing vocational training to help them find employment. It therefore requested the international community to intensify its efforts to assist in resettlement, the construction of schools and medical facilities, and the occupational retraining of displaced persons.

32. Mr. KUZNIAR (Poland), speaking on agenda item 11, drew attention to the serious difficulties in defending human rights in those situations not adequately covered by international humanitarian law or human rights instruments. The problem had assumed major proportions as internal conflicts and disturbances had proliferated following the end of the cold war. As the Secretary-General had emphasized in a statement made on 29 October 1994 in Bucharest, such conflicts now posed the biggest threat to international peace and human rights and called for new responses and new solutions. The international community, through the United Nations, was being increasingly drawn into those conflicts and called upon to play a variety of roles, including that of human rights protector. It had become clear that international institutions were least efficient when confronting human rights violations, and recent situations had shown up the weaknesses of humanitarian law and human rights instruments in dealing with violations arising from internal conflicts, as well as the inadequacy of the traditional means by which international humanitarian law and human rights instruments were implemented. It was clearly time for the international community to unite and strengthen its efforts in that area.

33. A first step would be for all States to accede to all the major United Nations treaties and the Geneva Conventions and Protocols. Such a step should not be confined to a purely formal acceptance of a treaty, but extend to the internalization of international human rights standards by all the administrative bodies of the State and by its people. Governments and public bodies should be obliged to disseminate information on human rights through education and the media.

34. Another important measure would be to improve early-warning mechanisms which might help to avert imminent conflicts and their associated human rights violations. Such early warnings had sometimes been ignored, as in the case of the warnings given by the Special Rapporteur on summary executions concerning potential conflicts and massacres in Rwanda.

35. In the view of his delegation, the demand for a thorough review of all the procedures for monitoring compliance with human rights standards and for remedying and preventing grave human rights violations was entirely justified. Those measures should include provisions capable of deterring individuals from perpetrating such violations and preventing States from tolerating such abuses, thereby removing the impunity which often helped to perpetuate them. Suitable deterrents during times of conflict included diplomatic and economic sanctions imposed under international law, various forms of political, economic or other pressure on persistent violators, and appropriate arms export and control policies. Other measures available to the international community which could be applied after a conflict had finished included an unequivocal commitment by Governments to prosecute or extradite perpetrators, to establish permanent criminal jurisdiction for the prosecution of violators of human rights and humanitarian law, and to equip that jurisdiction with all necessary funding, logistical support and expert assistance. In addition, the international criminal tribunal, when established, should be given the full support of all United Nations bodies and have an immediate reaction capability; it was essential to avoid repeating mistakes made during the early stages of the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, where much important evidence of crime had been irretrievably lost.

36. Human rights should be a major element in any peace talks and peace-keeping operations from the very outset, but that had not always been the case. Humanitarian assistance, although vitally important, was not in itself a substitute for mechanisms which might prevent further human rights violations.

37. His Government supported both the rationalization of existing mechanisms and procedures, and the development of new ones. While efforts should be concentrated on improving monitoring mechanisms and on the effective prevention of violations, there were manifest deficiencies in the content of such human rights standards as did apply to situations not covered by humanitarian law or the principal international human rights instruments. A "grey area" existed in which, for example, it was possible for Governments to claim the non-applicability of particular human rights standards to internal conflicts. Consideration therefore needed to be given to promotion of the concept of minimum humanitarian standards which would be applicable in all situations, irrespective of the legal status. Such standards would apply impartially to all persons, groups and authorities involved in a particular

conflict. In order to start consultations on that proposal, his Government was co-sponsoring an appropriate draft resolution to be submitted at the present session of the Commission.

38. In the same context, he drew attention to the concept of the Agenda for Human Rights which Poland had launched at the World Conference on Human Rights and whose relevance had been confirmed by a number of current situations in which international humanitarian law was difficult to enforce. That Agenda could be regarded as the means by which the Agenda for Peace and the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action might be extended to those difficult situations.

39. In his speech in Bucharest, the Secretary-General had said that the new diplomacy of democracy and human rights existed only in outline; it was Poland's wish that that outline should be transformed into comprehensive and consistent guidelines in order to assist the United Nations and its Member States in their actions and policies.

40. Mr. SINGH (Pakistan), speaking on agenda item 11, said that the adoption of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action and the establishment of the post of High Commissioner for Human Rights together constituted an important turning-point in the quest for global and national means of promoting and protecting human freedoms and welfare.

41. As the United Nations system of monitoring human rights continued to evolve, it was important to ensure that all parts of the system shared the same fundamental premises and operated on the same principles. In some cases, its reaction to specific human rights violations had been excessive, while other, far more serious violations had been met with near silence. There was a clear need for greater uniformity and consistency in the way the United Nations responded. One way of achieving that might be to make wider use of fact-finding missions, which should have the freedom to travel and conduct independent inquiries in order to submit reports to the Commission. In cases of grave human rights violations, the Commission should be empowered to convene a special session, as had been the case with the former Yugoslavia. It was to be hoped that improvements in human rights reporting and monitoring mechanisms would greatly contribute to the effective functioning of the United Nations system as a whole.

42. Turning to the human rights situation in Pakistan, he said that, in its endeavours to protect the rights and freedoms of its citizens, the Government had established a "Human Rights Cell", headed by a human rights activist. The Government was aware of the need to strengthen domestic laws protecting the basic rights of society's more vulnerable groups, such as children, women and minorities.

43. Pakistan was a signatory to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Government was serious in its commitment to eradicating child and bonded labour, and the Senate Human Rights Committee had accorded the highest priority to the question of children's rights. Pakistan was also deeply committed to the protection of women's rights by repealing or amending laws which might result in discrimination against women.

44. In Pakistan minorities formed an integral part of the cultural and social fabric. The Government was fully aware of the need to create an environment in which their rights would be respected, in keeping with the spirit of the Nation's founder, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, who had stressed the unity of all Pakistanis. The Government was deeply concerned about the menace of extremism, which threatened to create divisions between the various minority communities that had hitherto lived in social and cultural harmony, and would not allow extremists to jeopardize that tradition of peaceful coexistence. Its determination was inspired not only by international concern but also by the desire to create in Pakistan the tolerant and peaceful society envisaged by its founder.

45. Mr. REZZAG-BARA (Algeria), speaking on agenda item 11, said he wished to draw the Commission's attention to some of the achievements of the Observatoire National des Droits de l'Homme (ONDH) during the recent difficult period and reaffirmed his delegation's conviction that the restoration of civil peace could be achieved only through respect for the law and for the basic liberties of all the country's citizens. ONDH was composed of representatives of the public authorities and civil society; it was an independent body responsible for monitoring and assessing the human rights situation in Algeria. It submitted an annual report to the Head of State, who was constitutionally the guarantor of the rights and liberties of the country's citizens. In its 1993 report and in a memorandum for 1994, it had expressed its main concerns and made a number of recommendations based on petitions and documented cases which had come to its attention.

46. The transition to democracy, which had been initiated by the adoption on 22 February 1989 of a new Constitution, had been hampered by the intransigence of certain groups hostile to the development of pluralism and by the emergence of a radical Islamic political movement. From 1990 onwards, a violent struggle for political supremacy had begun, and in 1991 armed groups loyal to the Islamic movement had initiated direct action; they had stepped up their activities after the suspension of the electoral process on 9 January 1992. Following the declaration of a state of emergency, ONDH had set up appropriate monitoring and early-warning mechanisms in order to respond to the new situation. Thanks to its efforts, the practice of administrative detention, which had affected nearly 10,000 people, had been reviewed; most of the detainees had been released and the security centres closed.

47. With regard to documented excesses which had been observed in the application of security legislation, ONDH had defined procedures to ensure respect for specified detention periods and to make available judicial information on cases of alleged abuse or of suspicious deaths following the improper use of firearms by law-enforcement officials. It welcomed recent legislation abolishing the special courts established under special anti-terrorism legislation. That step had fulfilled the wish of ONDH and had recently been strengthened by an amnesty law aimed at reintegrating persons willing to renounce violence into the community.

48. However, the fact remained that violence was a daily reality for Algerians, although it did not amount, as some had claimed, to civil war or religious war; it betokened a political crisis made more acute by the rise of

extremism, which in its most dangerous form jeopardized national unity and diminished the chances of building a republican and democratic State. The fundamental character of the totalitarian and absolutist society which the extremists sought to impose could be judged by their targets: magistrates, human rights activists, Muslim and Christian clergy, intellectuals, trade unionists, artists and members of the profession, as well as ordinary men, women and children killed in terrorist outrages. Over 215 women had been murdered by armed extremist groups, sometimes after being abducted and raped; women, especially workers or teachers, were particularly vulnerable to the menace of terrorism. As well as sabotaging the economic infrastructure, armed extremist groups had attacked education by trying unsuccessfully to prevent the return of school and university students and by setting fire to more than 600 school buildings.

49. Despite its sufferings, however, the country was alive, functioning and full of hope. An awareness of national identity had been forged in the long struggle for national liberation, and would now be tempered by the current ordeals so as to form a new sense of citizenship. The Observatoire National des Droits de l'Homme, by helping to establish various human rights monitoring and protection mechanisms, was fully involved in that process. At the same time, it fully subscribed to the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international instruments, which served as a fundamental frame of reference, and wished to develop all forms of cooperation with international organizations and national institutions. For that reason, it endorsed the report of the Secretary-General (E/CN.4/1995/48) submitted to the present session pursuant to Commission on Human Rights resolution 1994/54, which advocated closer links between national institutions and the meetings and work of the United Nations relating to human rights.

50. Ms. ESCOBAR (El Salvador), speaking on item 11, commended the preliminary report (E/CN.4/1995/42) submitted to the Commission by the Special Rapporteur on violence against women. The report provided a general overview of the situation, but also included a number of more specific indications of the causes and consequences of such violence.

51. Discrimination and violence against women were contrary to the United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. More recently, the World Conference on Human Rights had solemnly proclaimed women's equality of rights, including their right to participate fully in all the activities of the United Nations. It was to be hoped that subsequent reports would include specific proposals and recommendations in that area. Her delegation endorsed the specific request made to the Commission that the preliminary report should be submitted to the fourth World Conference on Women to be held in Beijing.

52. The causes of violence against women were many, varied and far-reaching. They were rooted in historical inequalities, in educational systems in whose making women had little hand, in domestic and family circumstances and in conditions of migration. The situation was complex and daunting, perpetuated as it was by a multitude of attitudes which needed to be remedied in a

concerted effort to eradicate violence against women throughout the world. The Salvadorian delegation congratulated the Special Rapporteur on her work during the first year of her mandate, and looked forward with interest to the recommendations and content of her future reports.

53. Another area of particular interest to El Salvador was that of education and human rights. In 1994, the Commission had adopted resolution 1994/51 proclaiming a "decade for human rights education". The General Assembly had subsequently endorsed the idea by adopting its own resolution 49/184. Education was nothing less than an integral part of the process of promoting and defending human rights.

54. The report submitted by the Secretary-General on the preparation of a plan of action for the United Nations Decade for human rights education (A/49/261/Add.1) provided specific guidelines which could be the basis of a common and universal language of human rights. The report defined human rights education in terms of training and the dissemination of information aimed at creating a universal culture of human rights, strengthening respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and allowing human beings to develop fully and with dignity. Those principles appeared to provide a sound basis for further action and were in full conformity with universal human rights standards.

55. It was vital for the success of the proposed Decade that those involved should coordinate their efforts. In that context, the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Centre for Human Rights would both have to play a leading part. Her Government hoped that the Commission would adopt a resolution on the Decade for human rights education as an important step towards ensuring its success.

56. Mr. DAYAL (India) said he was somewhat disappointed that the report of the Secretary-General (E/CN.4/1995/48) had elicited a written response from only six States and five national institutions on a matter that could be of importance to the growth of a human rights culture around the world, namely, the manner of associating national institutions and the possible ways in which they could participate in United Nations meetings on human rights.

57. One conclusion to be drawn from the desultory response was that practical efforts to create institutional structures to further human rights sometimes became bogged down in debates and the politicization of human rights matters at the international level. Secondly, the report showed that comparatively few national institutions conformed to the principles adopted by the General Assembly in resolution 48/134. Thirdly, it showed that States had thus far paid scant regard to the participation of national institutions in United Nations forums or to the forms that participation should take. Such shortcomings were troubling, because one of the most fundamental difficulties facing human rights activists was how to give meaning and reality to universal principles at the national level in a way that was sensitive to local conditions.

58. The National Human Rights Commission of India would like to see national institutions participating in their own right when the Commission on Human Rights considered an item of concern to them. National institutions should

participate as they had done at the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna in 1993; in other words, they should be given the floor immediately after States. There should also be a procedure whereby national institutions could participate every other year in the Third Committee of the General Assembly when the item concerning them was included in the Assembly's agenda.

59. With regard to the recommendations made by the Secretary-General in paragraph 36 of his report (E/CN.4/1995/48), the National Human Rights Commission of India endorsed the view that, if the Commission on Human Rights decided that national institutions should participate in meetings of United Nations bodies, it should pronounce on the conformity of those institutions' structure and operation with the Principles relating to the Status of National Institutions as adopted by the General Assembly in resolution 48/134 of 20 December 1993. Similarly, note had been taken of the stipulation in paragraph 36 (b) that "The Commission on Human Rights should be informed whenever a national institution is established so as to be able to accord it the appropriate status, after seeking the opinion of the Coordinating Committee of National Institutions." It was the view of the National Human Rights Commission of India that the work of the Coordinating Committee should not be politicized. Therefore, a decision on whether or not to accord an appropriate status to a national institution should rest clearly with the Commission on Human Rights, regardless of whether or not it sought an opinion from any other entity.

60. The Indian Commission fully supported the role envisaged for the Coordinating Committee of National Institutions as set forth in paragraphs 5 and 9 of Commission on Human Rights resolution 1994/54. National institutions and their Coordinating Committee could play a valuable role, in cooperation with the Centre for Human Rights, in providing technical assistance for States wishing to establish or strengthen their national institutions. Bilateral discussions and arrangements between national institutions were also extremely useful, as experience had shown.

61. The National Human Rights Commission of India, which had been established in 1993, was a statutory and autonomous body. It had its own secretariat and investigative staff, and was financially independent. It had extensive powers of investigation and was responsible for keeping both Parliament and the public fully informed of its work. It had concentrated on strengthening civil liberties in India and actively opposed certain legislation which it felt undermined fundamental human rights. It was doing its utmost to eliminate cases of custodial death and rape, and to ensure that the guilty parties were punished. It had recommended to the Prime Minister that India should become party to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. The Government's decision would be announced shortly.

62. Since the Commission had been set up, some 6,000 complaints had been brought to its attention. They related to every aspect of the human rights situation in India, from the conduct of the armed forces and police, torture, child labour, the abuse of women and the rights of disadvantaged members of society, to the difficulties of minority communities and environmental issues. The Commission was focusing particular attention on child labour and was encouraging the formulation of projects for the elimination of child labour

and the introduction of compulsory primary education for all children in India. As human rights literacy was also a key component of the Commission's work, efforts were being made to revise the educational system from primary school to university level. The security forces and police were also reviewing their training methods, with the encouragement of the Commission.

63. India was a vast and diverse country. The Commission had therefore found it necessary to travel to the various States to see at first hand the conditions on the ground. As the Commission on Human Rights was aware, the most complex situation existed in Jammu and Kashmir. Representatives of the National Human Rights Commission of India had visited the area but, unfortunately, had been prevented from carrying out a thorough investigation. However, several individuals had managed to meet representatives of the Commission and every complaint was being examined. The Commission had informed his Government that national and international NGOs should be permitted to visit the area. The Commission had obtained a list of detainees in Jammu and Kashmir who were being held under the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act, which it opposed, and the Public Safety Act. Similarly, details of action taken against errant members of the Border Security Force had been compiled. The National Human Rights Commission of India was thus doing its utmost to promote and protect the rights of all the peoples of India and to ensure respect for the dignity and worth of each of its citizens.

64. Mr. MATHIASON (Division for the Advancement of Women) said that when the human rights regime had been founded, one of its basic principles had been the integration of women's human rights. The Economic and Social Council had created a Commission on the Status of Women, which enjoyed parity with the Commission on Human Rights, to ensure that women's issues were given the attention they deserved.

65. The integration of women's rights had, in recent years, been galvanized by the World Conference on Human Rights held in Vienna in June 1993. It had requested that "steps should also be taken by the Division for the Advancement of Women in cooperation with other United Nations bodies, specifically the Centre for Human Rights, to ensure that the human rights activities of the United Nations regularly address violations of women's human rights, including gender-specific abuses." The General Assembly, in its resolution 49/161, had called on the Secretary-General to report to the Commission on the Status of Women on how that should be done. The Division was working closely with the Centre for Human Rights on the preparation of that report. The report would emphasize the need for institutions into which matters of concern to women were to be integrated, to be aware of the importance of gender in their work, and the need for the involvement of an institution which was in a position to provide information, advocacy and monitoring.

66. The first task of the Division for the Advancement of Women was to provide information. It had routinely provided information on the situation of women to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, to assist it in its reviews of reports submitted by States parties. The Division intended to provide the same service to other human rights treaty

bodies. Its aim was also to elicit information from States in which there were more boys than girls in education, where women were paid less than men for work of equal value, where fewer women than men were found in political decision-making and where women were more subject to violence than men.

67. Procedures had been established to pass on information to the Special Rapporteur on violence against women and similar steps could be taken for the benefit of other human rights mechanisms. However, providing information about problems was only the first step; solutions must also be found. The Division would make available to human rights institutions its analyses which sought to identify, on the basis of national experience, efficient policies and programmes.

68. Following the fourth World Conference on Women, the Division would be in a perfect position to assess how the advancement of women was being addressed across the board. At the Conference, the Division would propose that annual monitoring reports be prepared for the Commission on the Status of Women, showing the extent to which human rights mechanims regularly addressed violations of women's rights, including gender-specific abuses. The reports could also be made available to the Commission on Human Rights.

69. Member States should recognize, in practice, the importance of gender in all human rights work. Similarly, all members of the Secretariat should ensure that the equal enjoyment of equal rights by men and women was a central part of their efforts. Combined efforts were needed to achieve one of the purposes for which the United Nations had been created, namely, "to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women".

70. Mr. VALENTINO (Observer for Malta) said that almost five decades had passed since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, pursuant to which the States Members of the United Nations had pledged to work towards the promotion of universal respect for, and observance of, human rights and fundamental freedoms. In recent years, particularly since the end of the cold war, certain regions and countries had found themselves facing profound political, social and economic changes which inevitably had an impact on mankind itself. Those momentous changes had, in some cases, led to conflict and serious violations of human rights. Human rights abuses had, in many instances, also given rise to internal conflict, ethnic strife and the massive displacement of populations. Human rights could not be enjoyed in situations where political freedom was limited. There could be no just economic or social progress without a democratic system that was in a position to respond to the aspirations of the people for sustained human development.

71. Malta remained concerned about the situation in certain countries where there were missing persons, refugees and internally displaced populations. One example was Cyprus, which was still confronted with a long-standing problem that had arisen when the country had been partitioned. Malta reiterated its support for the continued efforts of the Secretary-General of the United Nations to find a concrete solution to the situation in Cyprus through the effective implementation by all parties concerned of the relevant United Nations resolutions, particularly those of the Security Council and the Commission on Human Rights.

72. The Commission had been established with a clear and precise mandate, namely, to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, and in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small. At a time of upheaval and turbulence in the world, the Commission needed to increase its strength and credibility. Although many human rights treaties had been negotiated under the auspices of the United Nations, it was a recognized fact that situations in which human rights were violated were not resolved merely by accession to international instruments. Economic sanctions had often been proposed as a way to punish regimes that failed to respect human rights. However, when imposing such sanctions, due care should be taken to ensure that they were not counterproductive and that they were directed towards the offending party.

73. The Commission and the Centre for Human Rights could take a number of specific measures to improve the effective enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms. First, the Centre should play a more active role in identifying and publicizing violations of human rights throughout the world, in cooperation with other international organizations, Governments and NGOs. The Commission should look at ways in which that role could be strengthened, and how the General Assembly and the Security Council could become more involved. Secondly, increased emphasis must be placed on preventive measures, such as technical assistance and human rights education programmes. Similarly, cooperation with other international bodies, such as the International Labour Organization and the International Committee of the Red Cross, should be strengthened. Thirdly, the role of NGOs in the defence of human rights should not be underestimated and the possibility of organizing NGO forums prior to sessions of the Commission could be explored. Fourthly, ways and means of monitoring violations of human rights must be improved. High-risk situations should be under the constant surveillance and scrutiny of the United Nations through its representatives and monitors working closely with other international organizations, NGOs and community groups in the field. The reluctance of certain Governments to accept monitors needed to be overcome. United Nations reports on human rights should be widely accessible and publicized in the media. Fifthly, regional meetings, including those which had been held prior to the World Conference on Human Rights, often highlighted important areas of concern with regard to human rights issues. Regional meetings should be held periodically through the creation of regional commissions for human rights, which could then report to the Commission on Human Rights. Sixthly, the Centre for Human Rights should give further consideration to the establishment of a corps of regional and country expertise, as recommended in the note by the High Commissioner for Human Rights (E/CN.4/1995/5). Seventhly, membership of the Commission on Human Rights should be open to all States Members of the United Nations. In that way, countries which were not members of the Commission and had taken the necessary measures at the national level to protect and promote human rights, which were States parties to most of the major international human rights instruments and which had integrated those instruments into their national legislation could serve on the Commission. Malta was a case in point, as it was a State party to all the major human rights treaties. In December 1994, Malta had acceded to the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights relating to the abolition of the death penalty. Eighthly, adequate human and financial resources were required in order to enable the High Commissioner for Human Rights to make his mandate

more effective and action-oriented, to set policy directives and to permit the Centre for Human Rights to implement those policies. The Secretary-General should consider ways of making adequate arrangements within the Organization to increase such resources substantially.

74. In 1995, his Government intended to establish the Office of the Ombudsman, responsible for investigating administrative actions which were taken by or on behalf of government departments, local councils and other public authorities. The ombudsman would enjoy extensive powers to back up his or her work. The Office, which would replace the Commission for Investigation of Injustices, would ensure the protection of the individual against abuse and ensure that administrative decisions were just and fair.

75. Dr. MERSON (World Health Organization), referring to the AIDS pandemic, said that since the disease had first been diagnosed, almost 20 million adults and children had been infected with HIV. Of those, more than 4.5 million had contracted AIDS. Nearly half of the 6,000 people infected every day were women. Those figures were shocking.

76. Some progress had been made in the area of prevention. However, progress was greatest where human rights were respected. It should be noted, however, that widespread discrimination against people with HIV and AIDS prevailed, as did ignorance about how the disease was transmitted. Irrational fear of contamination had led not only to discrimination, but also to coercive measures erroneously taken in the name of public health. It had led to the imprisonment of some HIV-infected persons, had cost them their jobs, home and health care, had hindered their ability to travel and, in some cases, had resulted in physical violence against them. HIV infection was not limited to particular groups, which made a mockery of the perception that those infected had brought it upon themselves as a result of their irresponsible or immoral behaviour. The vast majority of the 20 million persons infected were heterosexuals, including women and children.

77. HIV prevention information and education were often inaccessible to vulnerable groups, including women, children, the poor, minorities, migrants, refugees, gay men and drug-users. For those groups, a prerequisite for successful prevention was individual empowerment, in terms of access to the means to avoid infection and the ability to use those means.

78. Coercive policies, such as mandatory testing, a lack of confidentiality, arrest and segregation, violated the rights to privacy, integrity of the person and liberty. They also drove people away from essential HIV information, care and support programmes. States should ensure that AIDS-related legislation and policies were not discriminatory, that they protected people with HIV and AIDS, and that they created the positive legal environment crucial to any effective AIDS prevention and care programme.

79. States should include in their national AIDS programmes specific activities which were aimed at combating HIV and AIDS-related discrimination and stigmatization. National human rights or ethical committees should be established to coordinate and monitor HIV and AIDS-related legal, ethical and human rights issues. States should engage in widespread educational efforts aimed not only at prevention and care, but also at non-discrimination and

tolerance. States should adopt special measures to reach vulnerable and disadvantaged groups in society in order to try to reduce their vulnerability to HIV infection. Given that women and children were among the most vulnerable, States should pay special attention to eliminating their subordinate status, which increased their vulnerability. States should support activities by NGOs and people with HIV and AIDS, and promote closer collaboration between NGOs which worked in the area of HIV and AIDS and human rights activists.

80. To be effective, however, action against AIDS must be comprehensive at the international level. The joint United Nations programme on HIV and AIDS, which would be fully operational as of January 1996, would promote non-discriminatory responses to HIV and AIDS. It would strive to make AIDS-related issues an essential part of national agendas concerning human rights and gender equality. However, assistance and support from United Nations human rights bodies were essential. It was up to the Commission on Human Rights and other United Nations human rights bodies to keep those issues under review and to engage States in dialogue. The report of the Secretary-General on international and domestic measures taken to protect human rights in the context of HIV/AIDS was a positive step. Of equal importance was the recommendation made by the Secretary-General that the Commission on Human Rights should consider the elaboration of guidelines.

81. By the year 2000, as many as 40 million people would be HIV-positive. Discrimination was not limited to the victims, but extended to their relatives, friends and associates and those blamed for the transmission of HIV. That implied that the human rights of hundreds of millions of people were being violated on the basis of health status. Human rights were universal; in the context of HIV and AIDS, they were essential in combating one of the greatest scourges ever to face mankind.

82. Mrs. BAHREMANI (Observer for the Islamic Republic of Iran) said that violence against women had been at the forefront of international issues in recent years. The matter had been addressed at conferences from Nairobi to Vienna. The culmination of the debate had been the appointment of a Special Rapporteur by the Commission on Human Rights in 1994.

83. The human rights of women and violence against them could not be considered as a private matter or an isolated issue. They formed an integral part of the human rights debate at the national and international levels. However, a careful, objective and comprehensive analysis was required, not only to avoid biased conclusions but also to help eliminate violence against women and violations of their dignity and rights. That analysis needed to be examined on three distinct but related levels, namely the family, society and the State. The family was a microcosm of society and women were the central figure of that small universe. In traditional societies, the role and significance of the family had not diminished. That was no longer true in liberal modern societies, particularly in the West. One element common to both societies was, however, the continuation of violence against women within the family. An adherence to a traditional, cultural and historical heritage, and religious values, had undoubtedly helped oriental societies to safeguard the family and preserve the basic structure of societies. However, superstitious fanaticism had prevented women from enjoying the status they

deserved even at the family level. It was alarming that on the eve of the twenty-first century, female infanticide continued in some parts of the world. The trend was diminishing but a preference for the boy-child continued, to varying degrees, in many societies around the world.

84. Discrimination against women often had its roots in superstition or in misguided interpretations of traditional and cultural norms. Thus, the notion of original sin had led some societies to believe that man was not only superior to woman but deserved to be so, so that women tended to be subjugated even in the role in which they bore the greatest responsibility, that of wife and mother. Long and patient efforts were needed if such prejudices were to be dispelled; women themselves should be aware of their rights and take part in those efforts.

85. Even in the West, the concept of the family was under threat, and the number of orphans and single-parent families was on the increase. Violence against women was often the direct result of drug addiction and alcoholism, and was unfortunately generally perceived as an unavoidable fact of life. In Western societies, emancipation had dramatically enhanced the role of women in society, had increased awareness of women's rights and had helped to ensure that those rights were legally protected. Unfortunately, emancipation had not succeeded in protecting women against the effects of pornography and prostitution, or against the exploitation of their image for commercial purposes. Violence against women, particularly sexual violence, continued to be portrayed in the media with increasing frequency. She agreed with the Special Rapporteur that pornography and prostitution, which degraded women to the level of mere commodities, were in themselves a form of violence. Women who were economically deprived or suffered extreme poverty, notably in the East European countries, were particularly vulnerable, and those aspiring to a better life in the West often found themselves trapped in a cycle of violence and persecution.

86. States had an important role to play in remedying that situation. In traditional societies, the State should ensure that in the modernization process cultural and religious values were preserved, and should at the same time make sustained efforts to remove fanaticism and superstition. It should promote women's education, ensure that women's skills were rewarded and strengthen legislation to combat violence against women. Liberal societies, for their part, should not continue to justify pornography and prostitution in the name of the principles of freedom of choice and supply and demand. While prohibition could not in itself eradicate those evils, it could at least reduce them if combined with increased welfare, health and education benefits.

87. The Islamic revival could provide a new opportunity for women to enhance their role in society and at the same time protect themselves against the causes of violence. While preserving their religious traditions and values, they could at the same time promote their greater participation in all aspects of modern life.

88. Mr. RI TCHEUL (Observer for the Democratic People's Republic of Korea), referring to agenda item 11 (a), said his delegation greatly appreciated the excellent report by the Special Rapporteur on violence against women (E/CN.4/1995/42). The situation outlined in that report confirmed the urgent

need to protect women's rights. The fact that serious acts of violence against women which should by now have been brought to justice and condemned by the international community still went unpunished, and as a result continued in new forms, gave rise to serious concern for the future.

89. Among the crimes committed by Japan during the Second World War, and which it was now seeking to conceal, had been the sexual exploitation of 200,000 women, mostly Korean, the forced recruitment of 6 million Koreans - amounting to a quarter of the country's population, and the massacre of 1 million innocent Koreans. Those were undoubtedly major crimes against humanity and against women, perpetrated by the authorities and the military on the orders of the Government. The Japanese authorities still lacked the political will to tackle that question effectively and were in fact seeking to avoid responsibility for their criminal acts.

90. His delegation had noted that Japan, which had initially recognized the Second World War as a "war of aggression", now described it as an "act of aggression", and claimed that the war in the Pacific had been a war waged on behalf of the peoples of Asia. It had deleted its crimes from school textbooks, so that the new generation of Japanese would not know the true story of their past. The discrimination and repression practised in Japan against the survivors of the millions of Koreans brought into the country by force showed that the human rights violations which Japan had begun to commit half a century earlier were still continuing. Thus, qualifications gained in Korean schools were not recognized for the purposes of entrance examinations to Japanese universities, and Koreans were required to adopt Japanese names and to speak Japanese instead of their own language. They were not even permitted to wear national costume. Women in particular suffered from discrimination in business and the professions and lived in permanent fear of violence.

91. Where the question of "comfort women" for the Japanese military was concerned, the Government was currently trying to settle the problem of compensation by setting up what it described as a "fund for peace and friendship in Asia". That made a mockery of the sufferings of the victims, and should be rejected as clear evidence of the Government's intention to evade its responsibilities. As long as the Japanese authorities continued to deny legal liability for their past crimes, Japan's attempts to play a more active role in international society could be seen only as a resurgence of its former militarism.

92. Ms. JEFFERIES (Observer for New Zealand) said the role of national institutions in protecting and promoting human rights was fundamental, since it ensured that citizens had a means for having their complaints investigated by a body independent of Government, and at the same time promoted awareness of the importance of respect for human rights in the countries concerned. She therefore welcomed the trend towards the establishment of such institutions in the Asian and Pacific region, notably in Papua New Guinea, and welcomed the Third Workshop on National Institutions shortly to be held in the Philippines. The Coordinating Committee of National Institutions, of which New Zealand was a member, had a useful role to play in defining issues in which national expertise could have relevance, and the subject of participation by national institutions in United Nations human rights meetings might usefully be

discussed at the forthcoming workshop. She commended the Commission and WHO for the joint workshop they had convened in 1994 to discuss the meaning of the right to health.

93. A new Human Rights Act, which had recently come into force in New Zealand, had made unlawful discrimination on grounds of disability (including HIV/AIDS status), or on grounds of age, employment status, family status, political opinion or sexual orientation. Following the Act's entry into force, there had been a dramatic increase in the number of complaints made to the New Zealand Human Rights Commission, and the Government had stepped up the Commission's resources accordingly. In particular, a Maori unit had been established within the Commission to ensure that complaints processes were accessible to Maoris, and to promote greater awareness among them of human rights matters.

94. The Commission also had a role in monitoring new legislation with human rights implications, notably legislation on domestic violence against women and on female genital mutilation. It was to make a comprehensive review of all New Zealand legislation in order to ensure that it complied with the requirements of the new Act.

95. Turning to agenda item 11 (a), she said that despite the success achieved in advancing the status of women since the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights, women were still underrepresented in decision-making posts and were still disproportionately excluded from jobs, education and health care. They represented the highest percentage of people living in extreme poverty, as well as the highest percentage of refugees and displaced persons worldwide. The persistence of rape, genital mutilation and other forms of violence against women was still of critical concern.

96. New Zealand believed that the overall objective of the forthcoming Beijing Conference should be the empowerment of women. Measures needed to be developed to ensure the full participation of women in all aspects of political and economic life, as well as in decision-making processes at all levels. The fact that 1995 was the first year of the International Decade of the World's Indigenous People was of particular significance to New Zealand, where Maori people held a special place in society; her delegation believed that issues of concern to indigenous women should be fully addressed in the Beijing Platform for Action.

97. New Zealand was proud of the measures it had recently taken to strengthen legislation protecting women from domestic violence. A bill introduced the previous year would extend the range of people entitled to apply for domestic protection orders, and also increase the penalties for breaches of such orders. Likewise, her delegation believed that efforts to integrate the equal status and human rights of women into the mainstream of United Nations activity should be intensified. As a first step, treaty bodies should amend their guidelines to request States parties to include in their reports gender-disagregated information on women. She welcomed the recommendation of the first meeting of special rapporteurs, representatives, experts and

chairpersons of working groups of the Commission on Human Rights that cooperation should be enhanced and exchange of information improved, and urged that as part of that process particular attention should be paid to the situation of women.

98. Now that the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations was being celebrated, it was disappointing that the composition of its Secretariat still failed to reflect one of the fundamental principles contained in the Charter, namely, the equal rights of men and women. The serious underrepresentation of women in the Secretariat, particularly at senior levels, had long been a matter of concern to her delegation. She hoped that one result of the Beijing Conference would be an increase in the number of countries ratifying the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. She wished to stress, however, that if that Convention was to function effectively, adequate resources would have to be provided for the Committee, and individual Member States would need to comply with their reporting obligations.

99. The Beijing Conference would provide an opportunity for setting up a strong framework through which action could be taken both globally and nationally to advance the position of women, and all countries had a responsibility to make the most of that opportunity.

The meeting rose at 10 p.m.